

I am running for School Board because believe that public education is intimately tied to the vitality of our community. Investing in our children now means a vibrant future for Sitka. In order to provide every child with the education they deserve, the Sitka School Board must have a vision, create structures to support that vision, and be accountable to the public. We must also advocate for our students at every opportunity.

I've been a resident of Sitka for 20 years. My husband, Paul, and I have three children, and we're just crazy about them: Zakary Wright-Rioux (7th grade), Silas (1st grade), and Avianna (SJ Preschool, entering Kindergarten next year). Both Zakary and Silas have flourished in school, and I have no doubt that Avianna will also do well next year. I am always amazed and heartened by the quality of teachers we have in our district. They care about our children, and it really shows.

My professional career and volunteer service have prepared me well for the Sitka School board. I am the Executive Director of the Sitka Convention and Visitors Bureau, and prior to that I worked as the Tourism Manager for the Sitka Tribe of Alaska, managing the Tribal Tours, Naa Kahídi Dancers, and Tribal Travel programs. I have also volunteered on the Sitka Convention and Visitors Bureau Board of Directors (prior to my employment there), the Fortress of the Bear Board of Directors, and served on the Cub Scout Committee during the 5 years Zak was enrolled in the program. I'm also a founding member of Lead:Sitka, a group whose purpose is to encourage civic involvement among younger adults in our community.

Academically, I'm not your average school board person. I started Sitka High more than a year behind in credits after a home school attempt that didn't work out, and I didn't thrive in that environment. I was two years behind in credits when I moved over to Pacific High, which was by far the best school experience during my teen years. At age 18, I was attending PHS and living on my own when I became pregnant with my son, Zak. When I had him at 19, I decided that I the best route for me at that point in my life was to get my GED and focus on earning a living for us. Even though I struggled in high school, I've always loved to learn. My experience as a student who simply didn't fit the mold of traditional education gives me a unique and valuable voice on the School Board, a perspective that may not be currently represented.

I'm a life-long learner, and I have continued my education by taking classes from UAS and other training centers. I tend to focus on subjects that will improve the quality of my life and the betterment of my career. I also love to learn from others. I find that a quality in-depth conversation with an intelligent person will always reveal more than just facts and statistics, but will often result in an increased self-awareness and insight into the human condition.

I look forward to having conversations with you about your priorities for the Sitka School District. More information about me can be found on my Facebook campaign page "Tonia Rioux for School Board", and I encourage you to contact me to discuss your thoughts and ideas.